

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Congressman Jim Costa (CA-20) today (Wednesday, Nov. 9) denounced the Amtrak Board firing of David Gunn, the train systems highly successful president as "outrageous." Costa described Gunn's dismissal as, "a sad day for Amtrak."

The Fresno lawmaker went on to say, "Firing David Gunn is outrageous; I simply don't understand the Amtrak Board's values. Members of this Administration that are under investigation or proven incompetent, such as our recent FEMA Director, are kept on the payroll, while quality administrators are fired for doing a good job. This is a distressing day for the future of our nation's intercity rail program, which has experienced real reform under Mr. Gunn's leadership."

Costa pointed out that California benefits highly from Amtrak. He said Gunn has been very helpful to Fresno and other Valley communities served by Amtrak. "Just recently, he worked closely with my office and Mayor Autry to help re-open the historic Santa Fe Depot," Costa noted. He added that 9.3 million passengers ride on Amtrak lines in California alone; and three of Amtrak's top national corridors are located in California: the Pacific Surfliner, the Capitol Corridor, and the San Joaquins, which services Fresno.

"Mr. Gunn leaves Amtrak after three years with a string of accomplishments and a highly successful track record. Amtrak ridership rose during his tenure. Last year, 25 million passengers rode Amtrak trains, a 4.3% increase over the prior year-which was the previous passenger record for Amtrak service. Mr. Gunn streamlined the employee payroll while increasing revenues and decreasing expenses. He also led a highly successful capital investment campaign that strengthened and improved Amtrak's ability to provide a high level of service. Finally, he streamlined Amtrak's financial accountability system," Costa declared.

The Board's decision to fire Mr. Gunn is the Bush Administration's first step to dismantle Amtrak service and force states to fend for themselves. "After 9-11, when this nation witnessed firsthand the results of a grounded air fleet, we relied on rail service more than ever," Costa said. "A 21st Century Transportation system needs rail service to be effective, but this Administration has a vision of transportation that is locked in the 19th

Century. Finally, I am concerned that the actions of the Board may be illegal, as they were conducted without a quorum present and minutes of this meeting have not been made

available to the public. They must be held accountable to the Congress and to the American people."

#